THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The matter has been taken up with the Government of Pakistan through diplomatic channels and is being pursued purposefully. It is our hope and expectation that these fishermen would be released by Pakistan at the earliest.

Posting of Ambassadors

2372. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to State:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item appearing in the Telegraph dated 25th November, 1999 under the caption, "Envoys flock to Delhi for plum posts";

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto;

(c) whether it is a healthy practice for the Indian Ambassadors in various capital across the world to abandon their post and flock to New Delhi to lobby for their posting; and

(d) if not, what steps Government propose to take to discourage this tendency?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir,

(b) to (d) Heads of Mission from abroad are required to visit the Headquarters of the Ministry in Delhi for official purposes with the prior approval of the Ministry of External Affairs. These visits *inter alia*, include high level, bilateral visits, Joint Commission Meetings, Foreign Office Consultations etc. In addition, Heads of Mission are also sanctioned leave on personal and emergency grounds to visit India with the prior approval of the Ministry of External Affairs. Heads of Mission are not permitted to leave station without authosisation by the Ministry.